

Message Text

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SUBJECT: SPEECH OF FAO DIRECTOR - GENERAL SAOUMA TO AMERICAN
CLUB OF ROME

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF FAO PRESS RELEASE ON DIRECTOR-GENERAL
SAOUMA'S SPEECH ON MARCH 10 TO THE AMERICAN CLUB OF ROME. (THERE
WAS NO TEXT PUBLISHED, SINCE HE SPOKE FROM NOTES, AND THE FOLLOWING
IS THE MOST OFFICIAL VERSION OF HIS SPEECH, THE LOCAL ENGLISH-
LANGUAGE PAPER HAVING GIVEN SOMEWHAT MORE EMPHASIS TO HIS CRITICISM
OF THE LEVEL OF U.S. ECONOMIC AID AND LESS EMPHASIS TO HIS GIVING
CREDIT TO THE U.S. ROLE IN FAO AND THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM, AND
THE INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT).
QUOTE DIRECTOR-GENERAL COMMENDS SUPPORT FOR FAO BUT SAYS U.S.
SHOULD SHOULD LARGER RESPONSIBILITIES IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- ROME, MARCH 11 - WHILE COMMENDING THE UNITED STATES' ATTITUDE
OF CO-OPERATION AND FIRM SUPPORT FOR THE UN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION, FAO DIRECTOR-GENERAL EDOUARD SAOUMA NEVERTHELESS
STATED THAT THE U.S., WITH ITS 'PRIVILEGED POSITION' ECONOMICALLY,
HAS A 'SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY' TOWARD THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.

MR. SAOUMA TOLD THE AMERICAN CLUB OF ROME YESTERDAY, 'IT IS
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SAD TO REALISE THAT DURING RECENT YEARS THE UNITED STATES'
SHARE OF WORLD FOOD AID HAS DECLINED,' ADDING THAT 'AS REGARDS
DEVELOPMENT AID IN GENERAL, THE UNITED STATES CANNOT BE
CONSIDERED AMONG THE MOST GENEROUS.'

THE FAO DIRECTOR-GENERAL SAID: 'IN RECENT YEARS, THE LEVEL
OF UNITED STATES ECONOMIC AID HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY BELOW THE

AVERAGE REACHED BY OTHER ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD) COUNTRIES.' THE OECD TARGET WAS 0.7 PER CENT OF GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT, HE SAID, BUT U.S. DEVELOPMENT AID REPRESENTED ONLY 0.26 PER CENT OF GNP.

TURNING TO THE PROPOSED NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER, WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS 'MORE JUST AND LESS UNFAVORABLE TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES,' MR. SAOUMA DECLARED THAT 'THE UNITED STATES HAS A KEY ROLE TO PLAY. ITS DOMINANT POSITION IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND ITS INFLUENCE AMONG DEVELOPED COUNTRIES MAKE IT INCUMBENT ON IT TO PROVIDE THE LEAD.'

EARLIER IN HIS REMARKS, MR. SAOUMA PRAISED U.S. INITIATIVE ON SEVERAL FRONTS THAT AFFECT THE WORK OF FAO. HE SAID THE UNITED STATES HAD TAKEN A LEADING ROLE IN CONVENING THE WORLD FOOD CONFERENCE IN ROME IN 1974. THE U.S. CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME CAME TO ABOUT ONE-FIFTH OF THE TOTAL PLEDGES OF \$700 MILLION FOR 1977-78 AND THE U.S. HAD COMMITTED \$200 MILLION, ONE-FIFTH OF THE ASSETS OF THE NEW INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT. THE U.S. CONTRIBUTED 25 PER CENT OF THE BUDGET OF FAO.

THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER RECENT TRENDS IN PUBLIC OPINION IN THE UNITED STATES VIS-A-VIS INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. HE CITED A RECENT SENATE REPORT, GIVEN WIDE PUBLICITY IN THE NEWS MEDIA, CRITICISING MANY ASPECTS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM.

THE SPECIALISED AGENCIES, HE NOTED, HAD BEEN ACCUSED OF UNCLASSIFIED

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BECOMING POLITICAL FORA OF THE THIRD WORLD, WITH THE MAIN OBJECT OF CRITICISING AND OPPOSING THE UNITED STATES.

'SPEAKING ONLY FOR FAO,' MR. SAOUMA SAID, 'I BELIEVE THAT MOST OF THESE CRITICISMS ARE UNFOUNDED. I HAVE FOUND THAT THE UNITED STATES IS A FIRM SUPPORTER OF FAO.' HE NOTED THAT THE U.S. DELEGATION HAD SUPPORTED A SERIES OF REORGANIZATION PROPOSALS HE HAD RECENTLY PUT FORWARD, JOINING WITH COUNTRIES OF THE THIRD WORLD IN ENDORSING THE NEW PRIORITIES.

'I AM ALSO HAPPY TO CONFIRM THAT THE FAO GOVERNING BODIES HAVE NEVER BEEN ACCUSED OF EXCESSIVE POLITICIZATION,' MR. SAOUMA SAID.

IN SPITE OF SOME GOOD HARVESTS RECENTLY, THE LONG-TERM FOOD SITUATION REMAINS GRAVE, THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL SAID. THE HUNGRY IN THE WORLD COULD STILL BE ESTIMATED AT 500 MILLIONS, AND IF RECENT TRENDS IN PRODUCTION CONTINUE, 'DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WILL FACE A CEREAL DEFICIT OF 85 MILLION TONS BY 1985.' 'IN THE FACE OF THIS SITUATION,' MR. SAOUMA SAID, 'HOW CAN

ANYONE IGNORE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNITED STATES, THE
COUNTRY WHICH IS THE BIGGEST PROVIDER OF FOOD AID, THE SINGLE
BIGGEST CEREAL PRODUCER AND THE SINGLE BIGGEST CEREAL EXPORTER.'

'ENDOWED BY NATURE WITH A CLIMATE, WITH PHYSICAL RESOURCES
AND, THROUGH ITS FORTUNATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, WITH THE INFRA-
STRUCTURE.... IT SHOULD HARDLY BE SURPRISING THAT THE WORLD
LOOKS TO THE UNITED STATES AS THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PARTY,
CAPABLE OF RESOLVING ITS GREATEST PROBLEMS.' UNQUOTE
BEAUDRY

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